

THE AMERICAN COWBOY



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How to Get Started



Cowboys...they've long held our imagination. From the time we're old enough to play cowboys and Indians, to the days when we realize it's only a dream, we are drawn to the allure of the cowboy. Kansas was the focal point of the long cattle drives of the 19th century as cowboys and cattle pushed through the verdant hillsides on their way to Kansas City. The cowboy is still alive and well in the Flint Hills! So, round up your cowboys and cowgirls, teach them the ways of the West, and head 'em out on their own personal cattle drive!

Materials contained in this kit are geared toward grades 3-5 and correlated to Kansas State Education Standards for those levels.

References to items from trunk will be in **bold print and underlined**. Graphics with a Figure Number referenced will have accompanying transparencies and digital versions on the CD. Watch for the following symbols to help guide you through the booklet:

All questions, comments, and suggestions are welcome and should be forwarded to:

Education Coordinator
Tallgrass Prairie
National Preserve
2480 KS Hwy. 177
Strong City, KS 66869
(620)273-8494



Indicates a class discussion point and potential writing activity.



Indicates further resources on the Web for extension learning.



Math Counts! Exercise for mental or written arithmetic.



Vocabulary Counts! New vocabulary that may need reinforcement.



Community Counts! Opportunity for verbal interaction with community members.

Please help us continue to share these treasures with other students by treating the trunk contents with respect.

Good luck and enjoy!

Curriculum Standards (Kansas)



The activities and materials in this trunk have been compiled to meet curriculum standards for the State of Kansas Department of Education.

Subject	Std	Benchmark	Lesson A	Lesson B	Lesson	Lesson	Lesson	Lesson
Economics	3	5		X				
	4	1	X					
	4	2						
	4	3	X					
	5	1	X					
Geography	3	2	X					
	3	5						
	4	2						
	5	3						
History	3	1						
	3	3						
	4	1						
	4	2	X					
	4	3						

Curriculum Standards (National)



National Science Education Standards

Standard D (Earth and Space Science): Properties of earth materials.

Standard F (Science in Personal and Social Perspectives): characteristics and changes in populations; types of resources; changes in environments; science and technology in local challenges.

National Council of Teachers of English

Standard 1: Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment.

Standard 3: Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts.

Standard 6: Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

National Center for History in the Schools

Standard 1A: The student understands family life now and in the recent past; family life in various places long ago.

Standard 2A: The student understands the history of his or her local community.

Standard 2B: The student understands how communities in North America varied long ago.

Standard 3B: The student understands the history of the first European, African, and/or Asian-Pacific explorers and settlers who came to his or her state or region.

Standard 3E: The student understands the ideas that were significant in the development of the state and that helped to forge its unique identity.

Standard 4E: The student understands national symbols through which American values and principles are expressed.

Standard 8B: The student understands changes in transportation and their effects.

PRE-ACTIVITIES



1. What are the student's perceptions of a cowboy? Where did they get their ideas of what a cowboy is? What cowboy movies have they seen? Have students write down their ideas of what a cowboy's life was like in the 1880s. This activity will be used as part of post-trunk Activity #1 later on.
2. Using the illustrated instructions on page 52, have the students practice tying a proper knot for making a lasso. This skill will be used in several of the activities. Once they can tie it, allow them to practice lassoing a chair, increasing the distance as they develop their skills.
3. Using the brand chart on page 54, teach the students the art of reading brands. Make up a few brands and show how they could be altered by rustlers. *Example...making an "8" or a "B" out of a "3"*
4. Divide the classroom into small "ranch" groups of five to six students each. Show the **branding iron** included in the trunk. Have them create their own "ranch" brands, using wide paint brushes. Make sure the brands are a good size, approximately four to six inches in diameter. Pick out the best brand from each ranch, and that brand will become the only brand their "ranch" can use. (In effect, a Lazy R brand will be the brand of the Lazy R Ranch, etc.) Then have each ranch make up 8-10 white papers with their brand painted in the middle of it, using bright-colored non-toxic paints that can be easily seen, such as red or orange. Attach a **string** to the papers so that they can be hung around the necks of other students who are playing the role of steers in Activities #7 and #8. Make enough brands for all of the students who will be cattle; 20-25 total brands will probably suffice.

Lesson A: History of the Cowboy



Objectives:

- Students will learn the origins of the cowboy.
- Students will learn the role of the cowboy in the settling of the West.
- Students will learn about the economy that drove the cattle industry.

Materials:

- ____ Map showing railroads and cattle trails of the West.
- ____ Map of cowtowns.

Curriculum Standards:

Economics

- (4th) B1-identifies how natural and human resources produce goods.
- (4th) B3-illustrates market economy, based on supply and demand.
- (5th) B1-economic interdependence.

Geography

- (3rd) B2-identifies local natural resources.
- (5th) B3-identifies renewable resources and their uses.

History

- (4th) B2-compares reasons for immigration to Kansas.



Cowboys hold a special place in the history of the United States. The American movie has shaped our impressions of just what a cowboy should be; how he walks, how he talks, and how he acts. He was a romantic figure, free to roam wherever he chose, riding off into the sunset in search of adventure. That made for some great movies, but hardly portrayed the real life endured by men (and even some women) that chose to live their lives amidst the hardships of the unsettled mountains and plains.



Rebel soldier



Union soldier

In reality, cowboys came from all walks of life, from all parts of the United States, and indeed, the world. Some cowboys were *mustered* out *Union* and *Rebel* soldiers unwilling to return to their former homes and jobs. Some were former sailors. Some were bums or beggars. Some were former slaves. In fact, one out of every three cowboys was either African American, Mexican, or Native American.

Very few were college educated. Some came west for adventure; others came looking for work after the Civil War. Some were on the run from the law. Just like the rest of society, there were good cowboys and bad cowboys.



Vocabulary
counts:
-*Union*
-*Rebel*
-*mustered*



Vocabulary
Counts!

-*vaquero*
-*Tories*

*Many cowboy terms are from
the Spanish language...*

-buckaroo...*vaquero*
-rodeo...*rodear*
-lasso....*lazo*
-chaps...*chaperejos*

To be a successful cowboy however, one thing was certain. He had to be tough, both mentally and physically. He endured long hours on horseback, in all kinds of weather, and received very low pay for it. Unless he was lucky enough to have a year-round position, he had to find another job for the winter.

How did the cowboy get started? The term “cowboy” is of uncertain derivation. The original cowboys were Spanish and were called *vaqueros*. They were very skilled in driving and handling the long-horned cattle that they introduced to North America in the 17th century.

In Colonial times, stock raisers referred to themselves as “drovers” or “cow-keepers.” During the Revolutionary War, “cow-boy” was applied to armed *Tories* who stole cattle from the American farmers and sold them to the British. Later, the name referred to Texas bandits who stole cattle from Mexicans. Only after the Civil War did the term apply to anyone who tended cattle in the West.

After the Civil War, beef was in short supply in the East. Many of the Texas cattle ranchers had gone off to fight the war, leaving their herds untended. As a result, many of the cattle ran loose, multiplied, and dispersed throughout Texas. This left many thousands of unbranded cattle available to virtually anyone willing to round them up.

In fact, there was such an overabundance of cattle that Texas steers were worth only about \$4 - \$6 in Texas, but could be sold in St. Louis, Missouri for \$40-\$60. So, was it any wonder that cattle were being driven to the eastern cow towns where the cowboys could get a better price for their cattle?



Math
Counts!

ACTIVITY #1

If a cowboy could drive 1540 head of longhorn cattle to St. Louis and sell them for \$42 / head, how much more profit would he realize than if he sold them in Texas for \$5 / head? What if he lost 35 head along the way from drowning, a stampede, or sickness? How would that change his profit?



ACTIVITY #2

Refer to the maps on pages 11 and 12. Divide the students into groups and have some research a trail and others research the cattle towns at the end of the trail.

Here are a few questions to get them started.

How long was each trail, in miles?

What are some names of the trails?

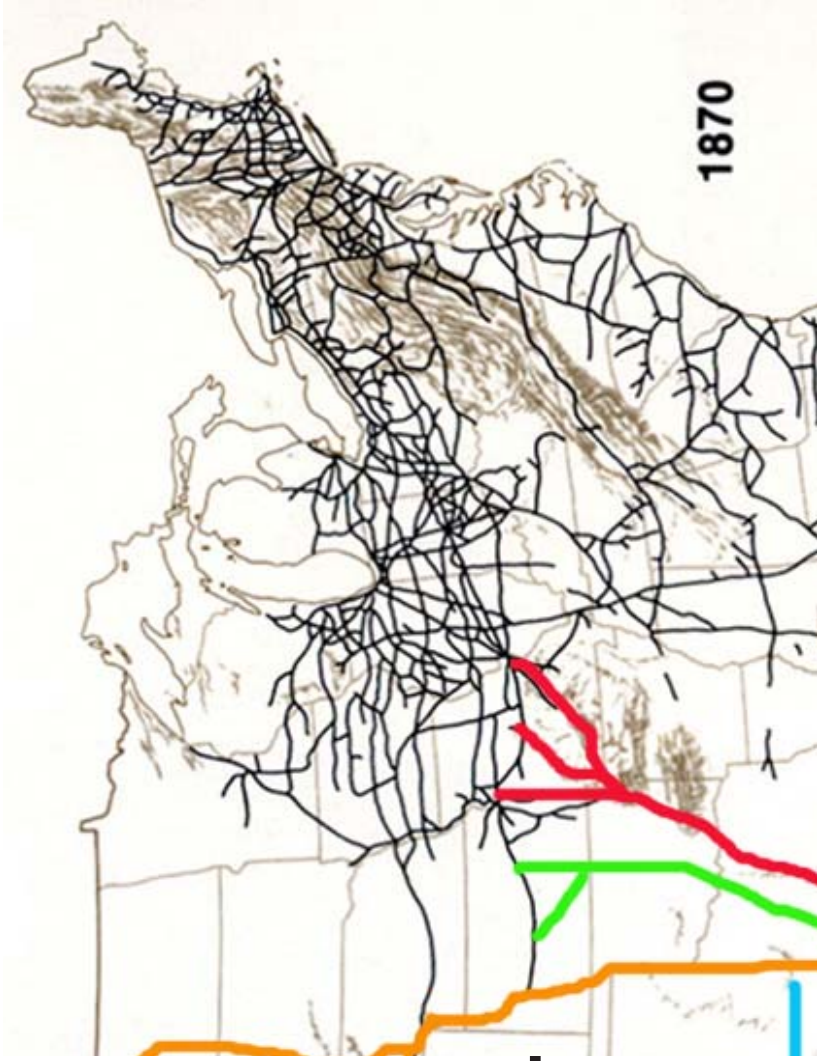
Where did the trails start and stop?

What are the names of some Kansas cow towns?

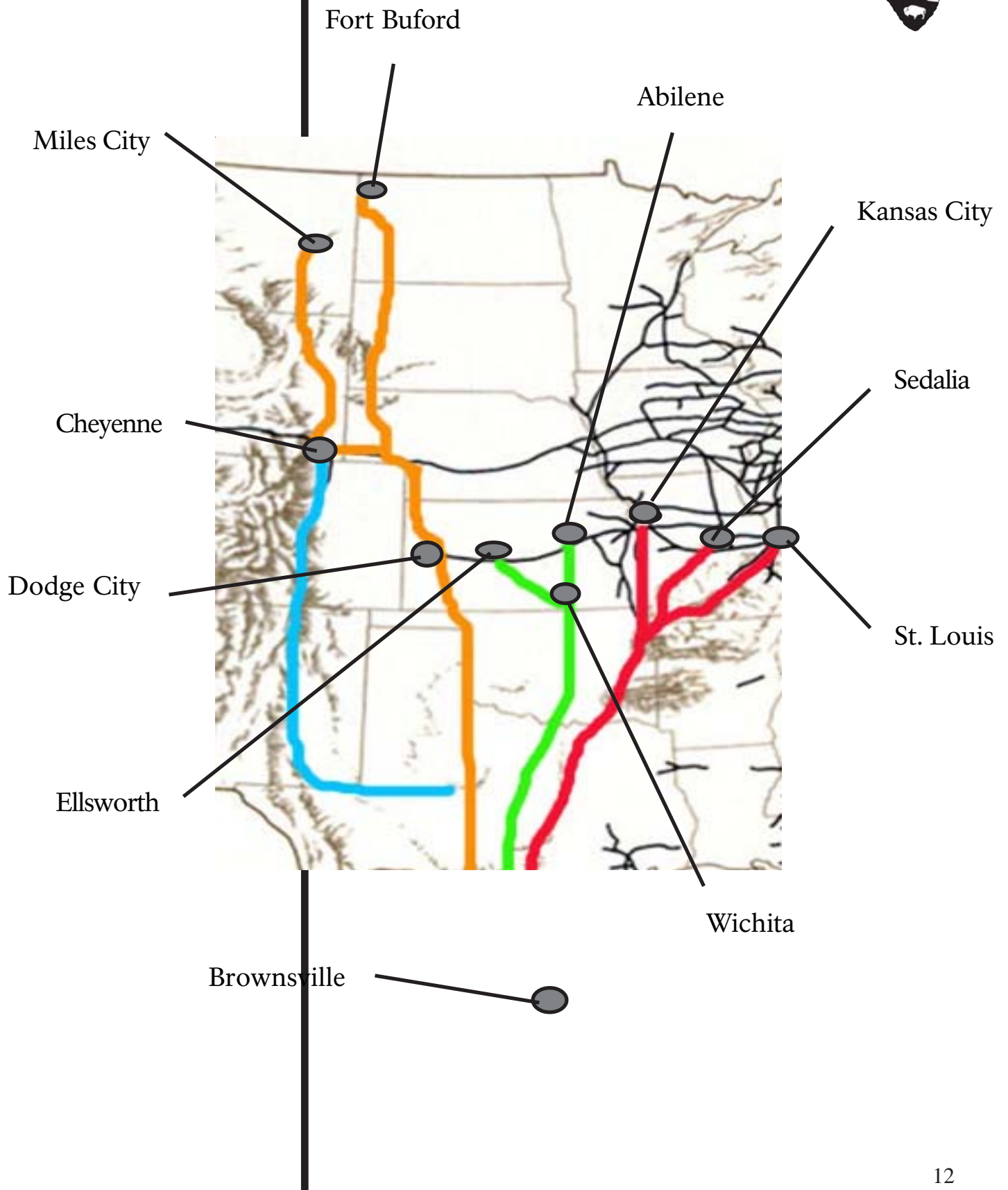


Railroads and Cattle Trails of the Old West

- Railroads in 1870
- Shawnee Trail 1840-1861
- Chisholm Trail 1867-82
- Western Trail 1876-84
- Goodnight-Loving Trail 1866-80s



Cowtowns of the Old West



Lesson B: Dressing for the Job



Objectives:

- Students will learn the different articles of clothing worn by cowboys.
- Students will understand the practical reasons for wearing certain articles of clothing.

Materials:

- ___ Cowboy hat
- ___ Chaps
- ___ Jeans
- ___ Shirt
- ___ Vest
- ___ Spurs
- ___ Boots
- ___ Bandannas
- ___ Leather gloves
- ___ “Cowboy Songs” CD

Curriculum Standards:

Economics:

- (3rd) B5-analyzes how needs and wants are met through spending and saving decisions.



Vocabulary
Counts!

-*utilitarian*
-*etiquette*



cowboy hat

To be fully outfitted for the range, a cowboy was covered from head to toe. His clothing was *utilitarian* ...every item had a purpose, and some pieces of clothing had many uses.

His broad-brimmed hat kept the sun, rain, hail, and snow off of his head. It could also be used to fan a campfire or carry water. A hat meant so much to a cowboy that Western *etiquette* allowed him to wear it indoors at meals and even while dancing across a dance hall.

His two-piece long johns were worn unless it was too hot. The one-piece Union suit became popular around 1900.

His shirt was a pullover shirt with a few buttons down the front, may have had a collar, and was made of cotton, flannel, or wool.

Pants were of wool, but in later years Levi jeans became popular. Cowboys usually wore suspenders, but if they didn't, their pants had to be tight-fitting.

Vests with deep pockets to store tobacco, or paper and pencil, were usually worn. Shirts and pants didn't have many pockets, so the vest provided a handy place to carry such items. Cowboys used the paper to tally the steers as they were counting heads during a roundup. Tobacco was popular either for rolling cigarettes or for chewing.

Cowboy boots weren't that comfortable to walk in, but their design was very practical. The pointed toes made it easy to slide into the stirrups on the saddle, the high heels helped to keep the feet secure in the stirrups, and the high leather tops protected the legs from the sticky brush.

Spurs were pronged metal rowels worn on the boots. By jabbing them into the horse's sides, they "spurred" the horse into moving.

Leather gloves were a matter of personal preference. Some wore them only when roping; those that didn't wear gloves claimed that gloves interfered with the feel of the lariat, but risked suffering rope burns as a result.



spurs



A slicker was worn to keep the cowboy dry in the rain and snow but afforded little in the way of warmth. It was a long coat made of oilcloth, split in the back for use while riding and walking.



cowboy with yellow slicker

A bandanna was probably the most useful piece of clothing that the cowboy owned. It was multi-functional....as a mask to keep out trail dust, as a tourniquet in case of snakebite, and as insulation inside his hat against the hot sun. It could also be used to hold a hot cup of coffee or as a general purpose rag.



Chaps were loose leather leggings that protected the rider from scrub and mesquite brush. They were also used as extra covering during wet or cold weather. The popular style of the 1880s looked like a pair of straight legged pants with the seat cut out, and sewn together at the outer edge of the leg. This style was called shotgun chaps.



ACTIVITY #3

AUDIO.....play "Jingle, Jangle, Jingle" from CD

Many of the cowboys' clothes had to be multifunctional. Pull out the clothes from the trunk and have a student try them on, while the rest of the class thinks of uses for each item. Pass the spurs and lariat around the class. Do some cowboys and cowgirls today still wear the same style as the cowboys of the 1880s? What's different; what's similar?



Math
counts!

ACTIVITY #4

Given the average prices for clothing and goods in 1880s Kansas, have the students decide what they would buy on an average cowboy's monthly wage of \$25; on a six-month-season's wages of \$150 that has to last them until the following spring. Refer to the 1880s price list on page 17. Compare those prices to today's prices. Ask them to explain their choices.

PRICE LISTS



1880s Price List

2008 Price List

Cowboy Hat	\$ 5.00	.....	\$ 75.00
Bandanna	\$.05	.....	\$ 3.00
Shirt	\$.75	.....	\$ 30.00
Vest	\$ 1.25	.....	\$ 60.00
Pants	\$ 7.50	.....	\$ 35.00
Boots	\$ 10.00	.....	\$ 125.00
Socks	\$.25	.....	\$ 4.00
Spurs	\$ 1.75	.....	\$ 50.00
Chaps	\$ 6.00	.....	\$ 90.00
Lariat	\$ 7.00	.....	\$ 35.00
Saddle	\$ 15.00	.....	\$ 1000.00
Slicker	\$ 2.95	.....	\$ 70.00
Long underwear ...	\$ 1.50	.....	\$ 35.00
Leather gloves.....	\$ 1.00	.....	\$ 20.00
Bed roll	\$ 8.00	.....	\$ 125.00
Colt Pistol	\$ 12.00	.....	\$ 300.00
Harmonica	\$.25	.....	\$ 15.00

LESSON C: Horses and Tools



Objectives:

- Students will learn about the different tools and equipment the cowboys use to perform their daily work.
- Students will learn to saddle a “horse” using a miniature saddle and tack.

Materials:

____ Brand chart
____ Saddle
____ Lariat
____ Paper pad / pencil

Curriculum Standards:

History

(4th)B1- describes transportation system.

Economics

(4th)B1-how natural and human resources are used to produce goods.



A cowboy's most valuable piece of equipment was his horse. A cowboy was useless without his horse. On the range, distances were too great and it would have been impossible to round up his cattle without his horse. A good horse was a tremendous help in turning and driving cattle in the direction the cowboy wanted them to go.



Vocabulary Counts!

remuda
wrangler

A cowboy's horse was almost always a quarter horse; a short, strong, fast horse that was very good in working with cattle. Most ranchers had their own horses, and expected their cowboys to use the ones supplied by the ranch. On long cattle drives, a *remuda* was taken along to supply fresh horses. These horses were cared for by a *wrangler*. The cowboys would ride much farther in a day than the cattle, because of all the moving up and down and around the herd, trying to keep them together.

The one piece of equipment that a cowboy was the fussiest about was his **saddle**. He usually owned his own. He spent many hours in it during the day, and at night, often used it as a pillow. So it was important that it be comfortable.



saddle with lariat



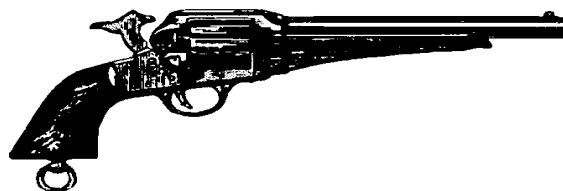
Rope or “**lariat**” was another important tool of the trade. A rope made from braided rawhide was thrown to lasso a steer’s horns or feet, or maybe a horse’s neck. Stretched around several trees, it could form an instant corral. It could also be used to drag firewood or pull out a steer that was stuck in the mud.



Vocabulary
counts:
greenhorn

Another indispensable item was a gun, particularly a 45 Colt revolver. The most practical use was for hunting game. It was also handy for shooting rattlesnakes or a horse if it had a broken leg and needed to be finished off. A gun fired in front of a stampeding herd might turn it away. A fun game was to shoot at tin cans on the ground, while practicing for accuracy. Gunfights as portrayed by Hollywood movies almost never happened except when some *greenhorn* had heard that courage in the West was proven with a gun.

*45 Colt
revolver*



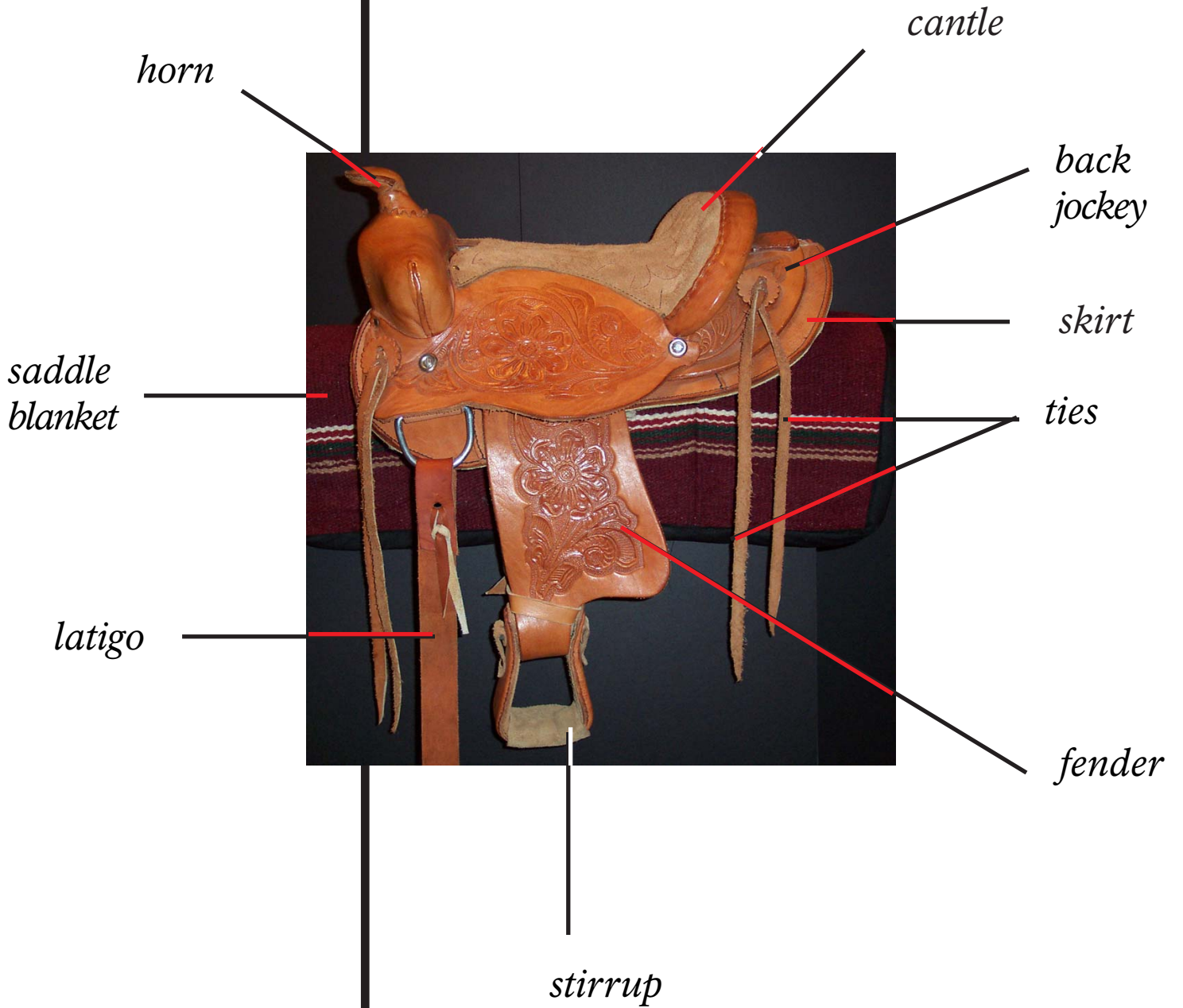
ACTIVITY #5

Being able to rope a steer was an essential skill for a cowboy. Refer to page 52 for instructions on tying a lasso.

Have the children tie a proper knot and try to lasso a “steer.”

ACTIVITY #6

Using the saddle and other tack provided, have the students try and saddle a “horse.” Make sure they do it in the proper order. Refer to pages 21-22 for diagram and instructions.



Saddling a Horse



Saddling a horse is usually done from the left side of the horse.

1. **Grooming**... groom the horse to make sure there are no dirt or hair clumps that can become irritating under the saddle.
2. **Saddle blanket**... place the saddle blanket just in front of the withers(shoulder).
3. **Saddle**... the saddle is gently placed atop the saddle blanket. Always place gear on your horse gently to avoid startling the horse.
4. **Cinch**... reach under your horse's belly for the cinch.
5. **Latigo**... pull the latigo through the "D" ring on the cinch and tie a "western cinch"as follows...
 - a. Run the latigo through the saddle "D" ring, from the outside in. Pull the latigo completely through and to the left of the "D" ring.
 - b. To tie the knot, cross the loose end of the latigo over the top of your latigo layers and insert it through the saddle "D" from the horse side out.
 - c. Then, thread the latigo end down through the loop you made when you crossed over.

LESSON D: Daily Life of a Cowboy



Objectives:

- Students will learn the techniques of driving cattle, including the different cattle driving positions of the cowboys.
- Students will learn what an average day on the trail was like.

Materials:

- ___ “Cowboy Songs” cd
- ___ harmonica
- ___ cowboy hat
- ___ bandannas
- ___ branding iron
- ___ apron
- ___ lariat
- ___ string
- ___ vest

Curriculum Standards:

Economics

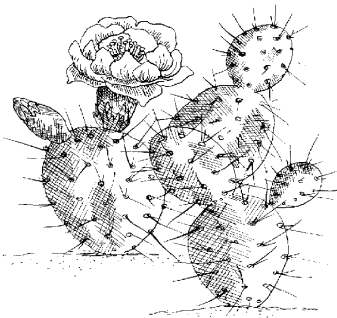
- (4th) B1- spending and saving decision.
- B2- characteristics of an entrepreneur
- B3- market economy
- (5th) B1- economic interdependence

Geography

- (3rd) B2- local natural resources
- B5- how physical environment impacts human activities.

History

- (3rd) B1- local individual contributions
- (4th) B1- regional stories define region
- B3- history of “Home on the Range”





Up until the 1880s cowboys spent much of their time out on the range. During the 1850s, most of the cattle were driven to California, which had a rapidly growing population. However, during the 1860s to 1880s, cattle were driven on long cattle drives across unfenced prairie to Kansas towns such as Abilene, Ellsworth, Dodge City, and Wichita. These towns sprung up along railroad lines to attract the cattle business; some would prosper, some wouldn't. Their fortunes depended upon politics, the railroads, and the line of settlement in Kansas.

During the spring, before the cattle drives, they held a roundup where the cowboys would find all the cattle that belonged to them, including all the newborn calves. In the Flint Hills, a cattle roundup was also called *gathering*. During this roundup, they would brand their cattle with their own brand, signifying their ownership.



branding a steer



Texas longhorn



The cattle drives took place in the summer and could last several months, depending on how far they had to travel. Cowboys worked long days; seven days a week, and their duties were often monotonous. They would be awakened by the cook long before the sun rose.

After a breakfast of bacon, biscuits, and coffee, they would start driving cattle until midday, when they would stop for lunch, which was usually a cold meal. Then it was back on the trail again until early evening.

They usually did not carry a canteen, but rather, drank water from a barrel on the chuck wagon or from any streams they might cross. A cowboy's life was a harsh, uncomfortable existence. On any given day, he might have to contend with a prairie fire, a stampede, river crossings, rattlesnake bite, being kicked by a horse, bitter cold, or extreme heat.

prairie rattlesnake



*prairie
fire*





cooking fire



He had very few comforts other than his bedroll and campfire, and perhaps a harmonica or fiddle for music at night.



fiddle



evening around the campfire



Some of the popular songs of the 1870s and 1880s are still popular today... “Streets of Laredo”, “Red River Valley”, and “Home on the Range” are still played by many western artists. “Home on the Range” was written right here in Kansas in 1873 and very quickly became a favorite dance tune. Today, it still evokes images of the western plains and the cowboy.



A song written by an unidentified cowboy in the 1880s...

*Oh, I am a Texas cowboy
Far away from home,
If ever I get back to Texas
I never more will roam.*

*Montana is too cold for me
And the winters are too long;
Before the roundups do begin
Our money is all gone.*

*All along the Yellowstone
'Tis cold the year around;
You will surely get consumption
By sleeping on the ground.*

*Come all you Texas cowboys
And warning take from me,
And do not go to Montana
To spend your money free.*

*But stay at home in Texas,
Where work lasts the year around,
And you'll never catch consumption
By sleeping on the ground.*

- from *Cowboy Culture*, by David Dary



While driving the cattle, cowboys on horseback were positioned at strategic points around the herd (see illustration on page 29). The trail boss led the way, scouting out the terrain ahead and looking for a good place to set up camp.

The company cook followed in the chuck wagon, which carried all the food, the cowboys' bedrolls, and other supplies needed for the long drive. He was often a retired cowboy with a wealth of experience. He would go on ahead with the trail boss in order to get camp set up and the meals started. Not only was he the cook, but he served as barber, doctor, and dentist as well.

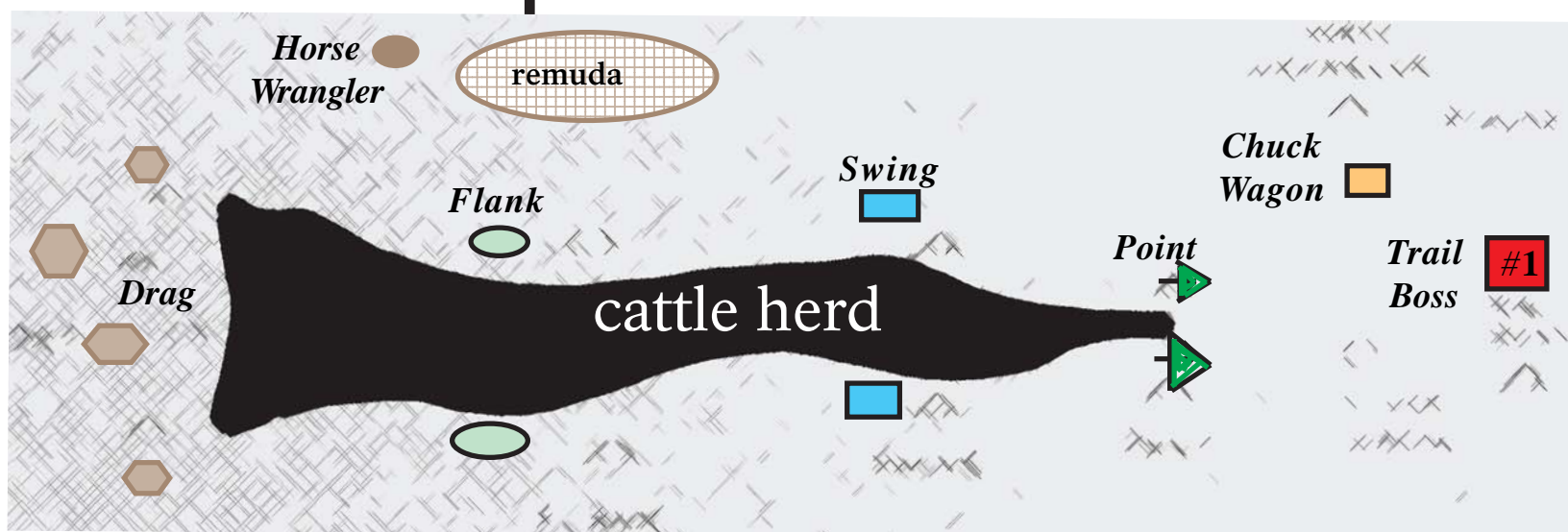
The wrangler and his remuda of extra horses stayed near the back of the herd, ready to change out horses when needed.



chuckwagon



Riding at the front of the herd, on both sides, were two cowboys, called pointers, helping to “point” the herd in the right direction. “*Point*” was an honored position, reserved for the best, most experienced cowboys. “*Swing*” cowboys would ride farther back, where the herd began to swell. Several cowboys would also ride on the sides or “*flanks*” of the herd, behind the swing riders, to keep the cattle from wandering away. Finally, bringing up the rear of the herd were the less experienced cowboys riding “*drag*.” They would keep the slower cattle moving with the rest of the herd. They probably had the toughest and dirtiest job, because they had to breathe all the dust stirred up by the cattle.



Which piece of clothing do you think the drag riders found the most helpful?



*“cutting”
cattle*



Vocabulary
counts:
cut or
cut out

ACTIVITY # 7

The object of this activity is for the ranch hands to identify those steers with their own ranch brand and separate them from the herd.

Select two students from each ranch to help round-up the cattle. Those not selected as cowboys get to be the cattle. Give each of the steers a brand to hang around his/her neck, then put all of the cattle in the center of an enclosed area. (If done outside, be aware the cattle may get a little rambunctious and scatter!)

Set up a corral in a corner of the room. Have the cattle mill about, making cattle noise, grazing, etc. Working one ranch at a time, one of the cowboys tries to *cut out*, or separate his cattle (instruct the cattle to turn away as the cowboys approach), and with the help of his partner, “drives” it over to the corral. In that way, the two cowboys, working as a team, should be able to move the steer in the right direction. If some of the steers don’t want to go, have the ranch hands gently put a lasso around it (without throwing it) and pull the steer to the corral. After the cattle have all been rounded up, switch out the cowboys to allow others to take a turn.



*cowboys and horses pushing cattle
through the gate while being
counted.*



ACTIVITY # 8

(AUDIO)...play “Cattle Call” from CD

(VIDEO)...show video of Tallgrass Prairie cowboys gatherin’ cattle. Listen for cowboys calling out to cattle.

Now that the “ranches” have rounded up all of their cattle, have the class conduct a cattle drive, combining all the ranches into one. This activity is best conducted outdoors.

Let the students take turns in assigned positions, as described in this lesson... “trail boss(1 student)”, “wrangler(1)”, “cook(1)”, “pointer(2)”, “swing(2)”, “flank(2)”, and “drag(2-4).” If small class numbers don’t allow for all of the positions, eliminate the wrangler, the two flanks, and the cook, and have only two drag positions.

The trail boss will be wearing the cowboy hat and the vest; the wrangler will wear the gloves and carry the lariat; the cook wears the apron; and the cowboys will be wearing bandannas tied around their necks. The rest of the students will be cattle, and should be wearing the brands around their necks. Even though the brands will be different, they will all be part of the same herd.

First, set up the herd and have them remain still until the cowboys have taken their assigned positions. Review the duties of each of the different positions. Show how the herd would string out into a long herd, rather than a small round one. Once the herd is in motion, encourage a few of the “cattle” to stray off just a little to allow the cowboys to herd them back in.



vocabulary
counts:
chousing

During this activity, the cattle should be **walking**, not running. Explain that running cattle takes weight off and results in a lower profit for the trail boss. Getting cattle excited and making them run was called *chousing*. It was a common mistake of greenhorns, and was a sure ticket to the drag position at the back of the herd.



driving the cattle

When everyone is set, give a loud “**Move ‘em out!**” to start the cattle drive! This is also a time to let the kids make noise and stir up dust, allowing them to make all of the cattle sound effects they want. Since these were longhorn cattle, have the students put their hands on their foreheads to make horns. As seen in the video, the cowboys also made noise. Whooping, hollering, and whistling were helpful in driving and steering the cattle. Let the cowboys drive the cattle around the playground a few times, then switch out the cowboys with the cattle, allowing all of the cattle to play the role of the cowboy. After all have had a turn, a bonus activity might be to have them all circle around a “campfire” and eat a typical trail meal of bacon, beans, and biscuits, while listening to some songs from the CD.

LESSON E: The Spring Hill Ranch



Objectives:

- Students will learn what type of jobs ranch hands performed.
- Students will learn what caused the demise of the long cattle drives and how that affected the business of cattle ranching.

Materials:

- _____ “Cowboy Songs” cd
- _____ Limestone rock
- _____ Barbed wire
- _____ Tallgrass pictures

Curriculum Standards:

Economics

- (4th) B1- how resources are used in production of goods and services.
- (5th) B1- economic interdependence

Geography

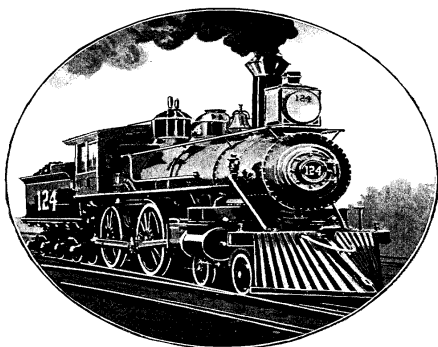
- (4th) B2- identifies human characteristics of Kansas.

History

- (3rd) B3- importance of landmarks and historical sites in local community.



*Learn more about the
transcontinental railroad on
www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/tcrr*



In the 1870s, Mr. Stephen Jones used the railroad to ship thousands of head of cattle through the Flint Hills, on their way from his ranch in Colorado to the market in Kansas City. The Flint Hills of Kansas was located in the tallgrass prairie, an ecosystem that was rich in nutritious grasses that provided excellent grazing for cattle.

Although Mr. Jones did participate in at least one cattle drive, most of his cattle were shipped by railroad. Once the transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869, there were a lot of railroads competing for the cattle business, so it became cheaper to ship them by rail than to drive them overland.

By the 1880s, with many railroad spur lines in place, many ranches were being established, with much of the land being fenced off, thus bringing an end to cattle drives through Kansas. Mr. Jones was one such rancher that built his ranch in the Flint Hills, near Strong City, Kansas. He called his ranch the Spring Hill Farm and Stock Ranch, for the springs which served his house.

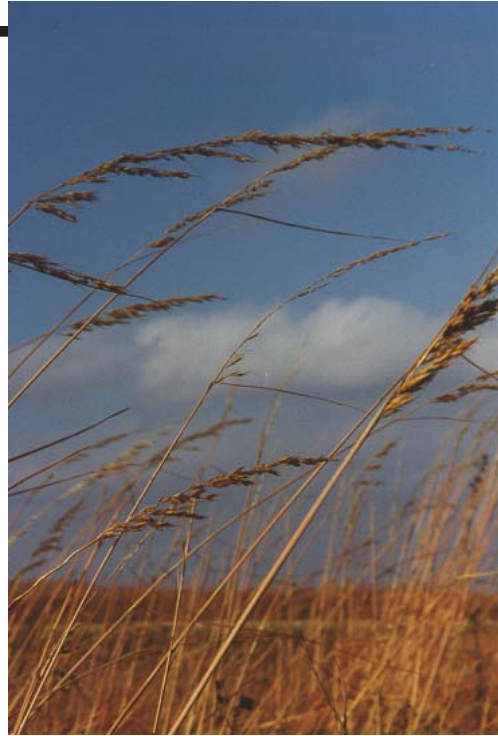


*Spring Hill Ranch
barn ; cattle on
the hillside
behind.*

Grasses of the Tallgrass Prairie



big bluestem



indian grass



little bluestem



switch grass



As he acquired his land piece by piece, Mr. Jones employed a local contractor to build 30 miles of limestone rock fence to enclose his eventual 7,000 acres. Although barbed wire was readily available for fencing by that time, many ranchers in the Flint Hills chose to use limestone instead. While some ranchers picked the rock that was close to the surface for their fence, Mr. Jones quarried his fence rock because it was a stronger limestone.



limestone at the surface of the prairie



Vocabulary
counts:
rod
reimburse

In one day, a worker could build one *rod* of fence...about 16 ½ feet long and 4 to 5 feet high, and get paid about fifty cents for his day's work. To encourage the settlement of the area, the federal government reimbursed the ranchers.



limestone fence in pasture



*limestone fence around
Spring Hill Ranch house circa 1900*



The cattle industry was changing and becoming more specialized. Herd size was reduced, resulting in better care and improved stock quality. Ranchers like Mr. Jones preferred pure-bred cattle such as Hereford, Shorthorn, Durham, and Galloway.

*Hereford
cattle*



*Durham Shorthorn
cattle*



Vocabulary
counts:

demeaning

The large ranches, fenced pastures, and the railroad all signaled changes in the cowboy's way of life. Neither the cattle nor the cowboys would be roaming as freely as they once did.

As the cattle business expanded and modernized, farm chores became an increasingly common cowboy activity. Riding line and mending fence would become a common chore. He would be spending more time on the ranch, performing chores that were different than what he was used to; some chores that would have been *demeaning* to a cowboy just a few years before. Some cowboys could not accept these changes in their way of life, and so looked for another line of work. It was said if a cowboy "sold his saddle," it meant he had sold his most prized possession, and was no longer a cowboy.

A cowboy, now more accurately called a "ranch hand," might spend the day mowing hay or doing repairs around the ranch. Another day he may find himself milking cows in the morning and evening, and shoeing horses the rest of the day.



winter on the plains

In the winter, many cowboys had to find other jobs. By late November, after roundups and cattle drives were finished, two out of every three ranch hands were laid off until the following spring. Permanent cowboys performed maintenance and repairs. Firewood had to be collected, along with other chores that had been put off during the summer. More serious winter tasks included going out from time to time to make sure the cattle were not freezing or starving to death, and hunting wolves that preyed on the cattle. If they did come across a dead steer, they would then try and salvage what they could of economic value— the hide.



ACTIVITY # 9

(AUDIO)...play “*Don’t Fence Me In*”



Have the students discuss how they would feel if they were used to working out in the wide open spaces, and then had to be tied down to a ranch. Have they experienced anything similar in their lives?

ACTIVITY # 10



Research the tallgrass prairie and discuss **why** it was such a promising place to establish a cattle ranch. Use the grass pictures to show the four main grasses that make up the tallgrass prairie.

ACTIVITY # 11

Mark off a section 16 ft. long, 2 ft. wide, and 5 ft. high to illustrate how much rock fence one man could build in a day. Discuss some of the pros and cons of using limestone vs. barbed wire.

- availability
- maintenance
- cost

LESSON F: The Cowboy of Today



Objectives:

- Students will learn what kind of work the cowboys of today perform.
- Students will compare the work of modern cowboys to that of the old-time cowboys.
- Students will learn how the cowboy way of life is being preserved.

Materials:

___ lariat

Curriculum Standards:

Life Science :

(5th) B2- how genetic information is passed from one generation to the next.

Geography:

(5th) B5- relationship between natural resources and advances in technology.



*visit www.noaa.gov
to find a weather
forecast for your
town. Is today's
weather good for
chopping ice blocks
out of the
river...burning
prairie...or maybe
maintenance chores
inside the barn?*

Today's cowboys enjoy the conveniences of modern technology to perform their duties around the ranch. Many cowboys go to college to learn the latest technologies used in the cattle business. They can use computers to determine the correct amount of feed that their livestock requires; check on stock prices; and use satellites to get the latest weather forecasts. They can communicate with other ranch hands by cell phones. While many ranchers still use horses, they also use pick-up trucks and ATVs to get around in, saving the ranchers time that could be better spent on more important chores.



horse trailers

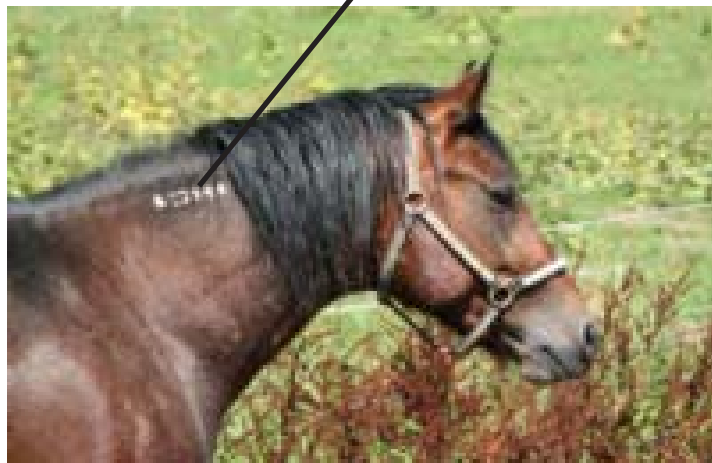




Cattle can still get stranded during floods and blizzards, but ranchers can now drop feed by helicopter during these emergencies, thus saving the animals and maintaining the rancher's profit margin. Aerial surveying can also tell a rancher about the health of his rangelands, and thus can incorporate different strategies to manage it. Genetic planning is now also a common business practice among ranchers, helping to ensure high quality beef.

Modern technology has led to more humane methods of treating their livestock. Many ranchers still use hot brands on their cattle, but brands can now be done with freezing methods, ear tags, or even microchip implants. Veterinarian medicine has also made huge advances since the 1880s. With many beef products being shipped overseas in the international market, there is close scrutiny of cattle raising methods and regulations. Even within the United States, cattle ranching practices are monitored for compliance with environmental, pathological, and ethical guidelines.

freezebrand on horse's neck





Vocabulary
counts:

finishing
packing plant

From the long cattle drives overland, to the railroad cars, to today's cattle trucks, transportation practices have dramatically changed over the years. Modern ranchers haul their horses in a trailer to the ranch site, drive the cattle a few miles to the loading corrals, then load the cattle into large cattle trucks. Once loaded, the cattle usually head off to a feed lot for *finishing*, before going to the *packing plant*.



*loading cattle at the
Spring Hill Ranch*





In the 1880s, it would have been very strange for someone to pay a rancher for the chance to play at being a cowboy. For many urbanites today, the allure of the cowboy image still fosters a yearning to “ride the trail.” Today, dude ranches are common, and a popular vacation option for “wannabe” cowboys. So popular, in fact, that a very successful movie was made about that very subject. “City Slickers,” starring Billy Crystal, follows the mis-adventures of several city dwellers taking part in a modern-day cattle drive.

Perhaps the one venue most responsible for perpetuating the cowboy image today, however, is the professional rodeo. Rodeos started out as a working ranch competition. But, as the frontier and the cowboys’ way of life were disappearing towards the end of the 19th century, the popularity of the rodeo grew. Some cowboys were able to make a living by competing in rodeos around the country.

Over the years, the cowboys organized associations like the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) and gained some leverage in the rodeo business. In the modern era, rodeo has continued to grow in popularity. Rodeo associations at regional and state levels also help promote the sport. In fact, rodeos are even part of some high school and college athletic programs.





Events such as bull riding, bareback bronc riding, barrel racing, steer wrestling, and team roping help to keep traditional cowboy skills alive. There's even a Little Britches Rodeo for ages 5 to 18, with events similar to those in the adult rodeos.

Every year, rodeos of all sizes and all levels are held around the United States, and internationally as well. The Flint Hills Rodeo, the longest running rodeo in Kansas, started out in 1937 in a pasture on a ranch near Strong City, Kansas. Held the first full weekend in June, it uses the same arena and grounds built for the event back in 1948. Nearly 20,000 spectators attend the 3-day rodeo each summer, a testimony to the continuing popularity of rodeo.



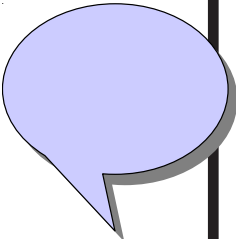
rodeo belt buckle



bareback bronc riding



ACTIVITY #12



Have the students discuss any experiences they've had using modern equipment on a farm/ranch. Think of different scenarios common to the old days and today. Using the technology of both eras, have the students compare how they would handle each situation. *(Example... a small herd is stranded as the result of a blizzard, far from any food or shelter. **Then.** ...a cowboy would have to ride out to try and help them, if he was able to get out at all.*

***Now.** ...the cowboy might be able to air drop some feed to the cattle via helicopter or light plane. He may also have a snow mobile to haul feed to them and clear a trail.)*

ACTIVITY #13

Have each ranch brainstorm to see who can come up with the most uses for cattle. Include food, clothing, leather goods....etc.

ACTIVITY #14

Have any students participated in any rodeo events? What was it like?
Can they name any rodeo events? Which ones would they like to do and why?



ACTIVITY #15

Hold your own rodeo! Make up events that mirror actual rodeo events, but can be done by the students. These would probably best be done outdoors. A few examples:

Team roping....They tried to lasso chairs in one of the earlier activities. Now, partner up and see which team can both lasso the chair in the fastest time.

Barrel racing.... set up two chairs or other stationary objects a reasonable distance from a starting line. The chairs should be about 40-50 ft. apart. This is a timed event in which a rider races from the starting line to the other two barrels, circles each one independently, and rides back to the starting line. Have the students either run the course, or have a wheelbarrow race with teams.



barrel racing

POST - ACTIVITIES



1. Now that you've completed the trunk, have the students re-write their impressions of what it's like to be a cowboy. Compare the two. Have their ideas changed? Were they surprised to learn what it's like to be a "real" cowboy?

2. Cowboy songs and poetry have long been a part of the Old West. Have the students write a short cowboy poem (one that is written from a cowboy's point of view) about either their experiences on a farm/ranch, or based on what they've learned from this cowboy trunk. You might limit the poems to 10 lines or less. An example of a modern cowboy song is on page 51. It's by Dan Seals and is called "God Must be a Cowboy."

3. Have the different "ranches" write and perform a cowboy song, perhaps to the tune of one of the songs they heard on the CD.

4. Visit the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City, OK, or visit their interactive website www.nationalcowboymuseum.org.



5. Visit a nearby historical society museum, living history museum, or library to see artifacts, pictures, and stories about how life was like in their own town, or one near them.
6. Have them bring in old photos (or copies) of someone they or their parents knew and tell the story behind that picture.
7. Have them conduct an oral interview with an “old-timer”. It can be with a family member, friend, or local rancher. If possible, have them tape record it, with the interviewee’s permission, of course. Guide the students in the types of questions they might ask in the interview.
8. Invite a local rancher, preferably an “old-timer” who’s lived through the technological changes, to speak about how it used to be.



God Must Be a Cowboy

A campfire, some coffee, from a tin cup in my hand
Sure warms the fingers when it's cold.
A-playing an old guitar, a friend I understand,
Sure smooths the wrinkles in my soul.

A-sleeping in the moonlight, a blanket for a bed,
Leaves a peaceful feeling in my mind.
Waking up in the morning, with an eagle overhead,
makes me want to fly away before my time.

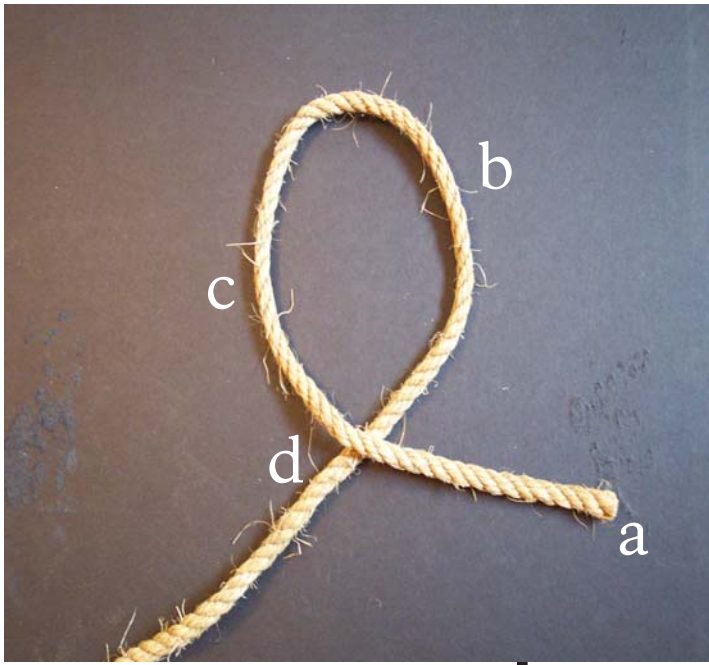


And I think God must be a cowboy at heart,
He made wide-open spaces from the start.
He made grass and trees and mountains,
and a horse to be a friend,
And trails to lead old cowboys home again.

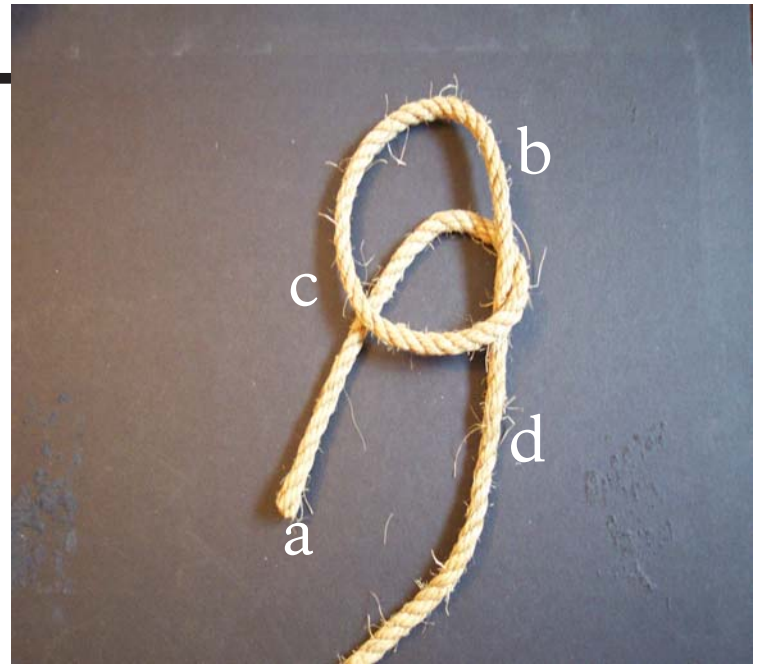
Night life and big cities is alright for awhile,
Sure makes you feel good when you're there.
But the country's so pretty it goes on and on
for miles,
Takes away my troubles and my cares

And I think God must be a cowboy at heart,
He made wide-open spaces from the start.
He made grass and trees and mountains,
and a horse to be a friend,
And trails to lead old cowboys home again,
And trails to lead old cowboys home again.

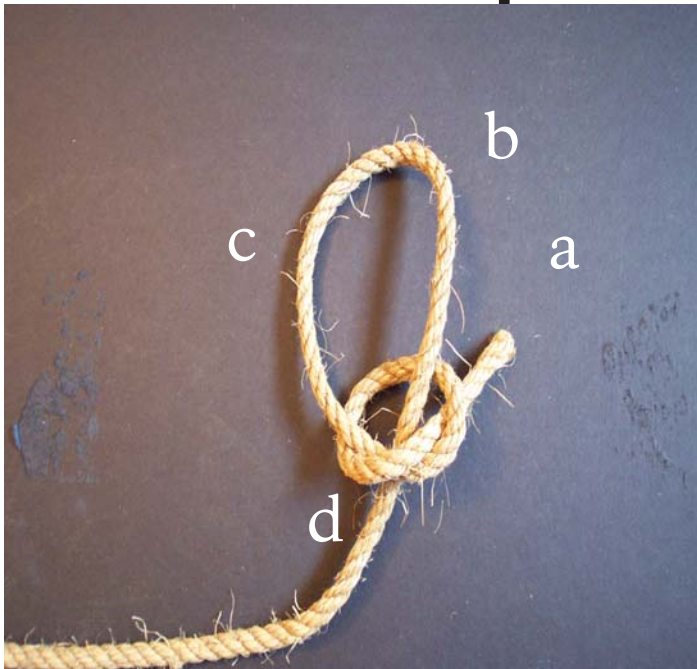
Tying a Lasso.



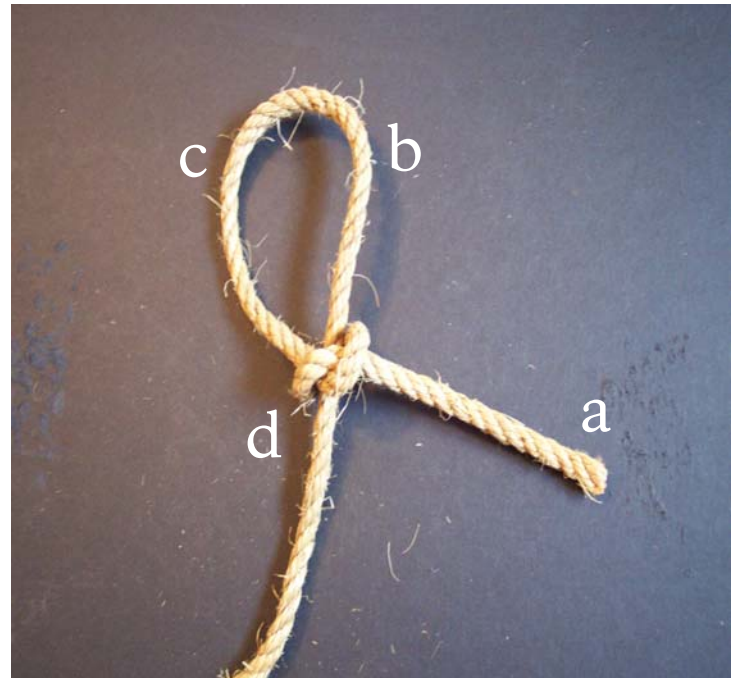
Step #1



Step #2



Step #3



Step #4

BRANDING



Brands have been used for thousands of years as a means to identify ownership. The ancient Romans branded not only their livestock, but slaves and criminals as well. Cattle ranchers in the United States have long used brands. In fact, some brands become so famous as to become like a coat of arms for the family history. It represents their reputation and can live on long after the family name is forgotten.

In 1885, Colorado had 12,000 registered brands, and today Texas has about 230,000 brands.

In the old days, hot brands were used exclusively. A “hot brand” means a branding iron was placed in the campfire and allowed to get very hot. It was then placed on the animal's hide, usually its left hip, for several seconds to burn a permanent imprint on the animal. If the brand burned too deep, there was a chance for infection. If not burned deep enough, it's possible the brand would not be clear enough to read.

Several reasons have been given by some old-timers for branding the left hip. Some say cattle have a tendency to move more to the left than to the right, making the brand more visible to the cowboys during the roundups. Others say people read from left to right, and thus read from head to tail.

Still others maintain that a right-handed cowboy would ride just to the left of the animal and could see the brand better. Regardless of where the brand was located, the location was recorded in the brand books.



The best brands are simple and hard to alter. It is difficult for cattle rustlers to change the brand. The simpler the brand, the easier it is to read. Brands are read left to right, top to bottom, and outside to inside.

Following are a few examples of brands and "calls" them.

Circle S



Z Bar



Flying F

Diamond J



Mashed

Bar BQ



References and Additional Resources



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- Lindmier/Mount; *I See By Your Outfit*; High Plains Press; Glendo, WY

INVENTORY



Please take the time to check all of the items in the trunk before and after use. If anything is missing or damaged, please contact us immediately.

Tallgrass Prairie
National Preserve
2480 KS Hwy 177
Strong City, KS 66869
(620) 273-8494
tapr_interpretation@nps.gov

- ☐ activity booklet
- ☐ video of Spring Hill Ranch roundup.
- ☐ photo CD
- ☐ "Cowboy Songs" CD
- ☐ transparencies:
 - ☐ Railroads and Cattle Trails Map of the Old West
 - ☐ 1880s price list
 - ☐ Tying a Lasso

Laminated pictures:

- ☐ chuckwagon
- ☐ evening camp
- ☐ longhorn
- ☐ Spring Hill Ranch barn
- ☐ limestone fence
- ☐ hereford cattle
- ☐ tallgrass species
- ☐ horse trailer
- ☐ cattle trucks

- ☐ Evaluation Form

Activity supplies:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> cowboy hat | <input type="checkbox"/> saddle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> jeans | <input type="checkbox"/> saddle blanket |
| <input type="checkbox"/> chaps | <input type="checkbox"/> lariat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> shirt | <input type="checkbox"/> paper pad |
| <input type="checkbox"/> vest | <input type="checkbox"/> pencil |
| <input type="checkbox"/> spurs | <input type="checkbox"/> branding iron |
| <input type="checkbox"/> boots | <input type="checkbox"/> chuckwagon apron |
| <input type="checkbox"/> bandannas | <input type="checkbox"/> string for paper brands |
| <input type="checkbox"/> leather gloves | <input type="checkbox"/> limestone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> brand chart | <input type="checkbox"/> barbed wire |